

From: Nancy Smith [mailto:irasmith@mcn.org]
Sent: Sunday, February 03, 2008 2:26 PM
To: MLPAComments
Subject: MLPA Initiative

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my concern regarding the possible closures/restrictions to the northern Sonoma coast. I have lived in Sonoma County my whole life and feel as though I have a realistic grasp of the environmental concerns in the area. I received a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science: Resource Conservation and Restoration from Sonoma State University in 2005, which, paired with my life experience in the area, gives me a fairly broad understanding of the region. There is without a doubt some sentiment involved in this issue. Since I could walk I have been enjoying the coastline on the Richardson ranches. These experiences helped inspire me to pursue a career in the environmental field. I consider myself a conservationist, but believe that resources should be accessible but not exploited. It seems to me that the proposed regulation packages (especially the most restrictive) for these properties conflict with the fundamental theories of resource conservation.

At first look (and to those who don't understand the area and its systems) these properties seem ripe for closure. This beautiful section of coast has abundant sea life, rich with diversity. It seems extraordinarily pristine when compared to areas that receive more pressure from sportsman and development. I find it to be wasteful to impose heavy, non-commercial regulations on an area that has already been under some sort of protection. The species density and richness numbers that are so impressive are a testament to the stewardship that has been happening here for over one hundred years. By "protecting" small pockets of areas like the Richardson properties you are essentially creating a matrix of small, isolated habitat areas. I feel as though resources would be much better utilized by trying to protect the exploited areas that surround the more intact habitats. By allowing these more pristine habitats to expand into the surrounding heavily used area a larger protected ecosystem would be developed. If these areas needed more protection I feel as though they would be lacking the qualities that made them appear so attractive.

I feel that the proposed plans have a major impact on the community, especially the landowners. Restricted use of these properties definitely appears to be a major taking. Fiscal implications aside, these areas have been a recreational, ceremonial, economic, resource gathering epicenter. The coastline has been such a major part of the coastal lifestyle for over a century. It would truly be tragic to see such a thing dissolve without major benefits to society. As a conservationist I feel that it is equally as important to protect wonderful resources for individuals to utilize and enjoy, as it is to create new such places from damaged one. I am all for improving our sensitive local oceanic habitats, and I feel as though some areas are in dire need of intervention. If finding protection areas where you can get the most improvement per dollar is the goal, I feel as though the mark was missed.

Thanks for you time,
Ira M. Smith